

THE DECLINING STATUS OF THE MALAY LANGUAGE AND EFFORTS IN REVITALIZING ITS USE IN SINGAPORE

Roksana Bibi binte Abdullah¹

Abstract

The status of the Malay Language in Singapore has undergone radical changes when People's Action Party (PAP) won the mandate to form the government in 1959. Many initiatives to promote the Malay Language were carried out; however, the motivation to spread the Malay Language by the government and the multi-racial Singaporeans waned after independence and separation from Malaya. The use of Malay Language has shrunk. The decline in the status of the Malay Language happened in stages. The pull of globalization affecting the Malay community proves daunting and difficult to counter. Although there is a collective consciousness about the declining usage of the Malay Language in Singapore; efforts by various parties that have been carried out, have not improved the situation significantly.

Key words: Malay language; reversing language shift; commercial value of language; utilitarian value of language.

Introduction

The Malay Language has become the lingua franca in most parts of South East Asia as well as being the language of trade and commerce in Asia from the 7th to the 16th century, spreading fast and continuing to develop as a modern language. With its adaptable characteristic, the Malay Language has gone through a careful process of language planning when it was chosen as the national and official language of countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore.

According to Asmah (2008:14), alongside the use of the Malay Language as a mother tongue in the Malay Archipelago, also known as the Malay world, there exist more than 500 indigenous communities in Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia with their own ethnic languages as tools of communication within their own communities. Despite this, the Malay Language has evolved to become the catalyst in unifying the various ethnic languages in promoting cooperation between the communities with similar roots in the Malay world.

Singapore, which was originally a part of Malaya, has together experienced a tidal wave of language change. The Malays in Singapore comprise a variety of groups with different ethnicity and mother tongues. Most of the Malay communities originate from parts of Indonesia like Java, Madura, Makassar, Minang and the Riau islands as well as natives in Singapore who share similar language and culture with the Malay community in Malaysia; seeing as it is that Singapore was once part of Malaysia. The Malay community is native to Singapore as found in many historical records about Singapore. When Raffles arrived in Singapore in 1819, there existed Malay native residents ruled by a Temenggong. This Malay community grew in size due to the migration of the various Malay sub-groups, mainly from Malaya and the Riau islands (islands which lie in the Straits of Malacca to the north-east of Sumatra and directly south of Singapore, i.e. Bintan, Batam, Karimun, Lingga as well as many other smaller islands and islets). Singapore also experienced an influx of migrants from the nearby countries to take advantage of its economic success, especially in the growing trading sector. The amalgamation of the various backgrounds resulted in the polyglossic environment present in Singapore now.

Early History of the Malay Language in Singapore

In reviewing the historical aspect of Singapore, the position or status of the Malay Language has undergone radical changes when People's Action Party (PAP) won the mandate to form the government in 1959. The main language policy in Singapore since the establishment of the PAP government can be described as a policy that upholds the variety of languages or linguistic pluralism. There are four official languages in Singapore - English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. The last three (Malay, Mandarin and Tamil) are local ethnic languages while English was established during the British colonial times as the language of administration, mass communication and workplace.

The complex sociolinguistic situation in Singapore could be attributed to the existence of the four official languages and more than ten vernacular languages. The vernacular languages in this context do not enjoy any status in Singapore and are spoken by only a small percentage of its citizens; for example, Javanese, Bawean, Banjar, Bugis, Arabic, Urdu and others. There are also Chinese dialects such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Hainanese and others. These show the polyglossic and multilingual environment in Singapore. In the selection of a national language, the Malay language was accorded this honour as soon as the PAP government came into existence in 1959, as decreed in the Republic of Singapore Independence Act 1965 as follows:

- (1) Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English shall be the four official languages in Singapore.
- (2) The national language shall be Malay language and shall be in Roman script, provided that:
 - (a) No persons shall be prohibited or prevented from using or from learning any other language;
 - (b) Nothing in this section shall prejudice the right of the government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any other community in Singapore.

(Singapore Gazette Acts Supplement, 1965: 99 - 100)

At the time, PAP believed that the Malay Language should be a subject taught nationwide not only at the primary school level but should also enjoy priority over the other languages as a second language that must be taken. PAP also emphasized that the Malay Language should be the main language in Singapore.

In the General Election of May, 1959, PAP had vowed to make the Malay Language as the lingua franca of Singapore. This was shown, for example, in the election campaign of 1959 when Goh Keng Swee had promised that the Malay Language would be accorded special status in PAP's language policies, outlined clearly in the following extract:

"..... in future society, we hope the barriers between groups will have disappeared. People will no longer live in groups isolated from each other. There will be free communication through a common language - Malay"

(Goh Keng Swee, Straits Times, 4 Jun 1959)

As such, it is clear that the Malay Language was given a prestigious political status; that is, the Malay Language was accorded the status of the national language. The intention of according the Malay language the status of national language was not nominal or symbolic; rather, the PAP government thought of the Malay language as a comprehensive and workplace language. The elevation of the Malay Language to such a status was motivated by external politics. PAP, at that time, believed that the survival of Singapore politically and economically rested upon its merger with Malaya. It is clear that the status of Malay language in Singapore since the inception of PAP had undergone a continuous change.

The government has taken steps to strengthen the status of the Malay Language primarily through the education system (Gopinathan, 1974). The first step was to set up the Malay Education Advisory Committee, which made the following suggestions after a trip to Indonesia in 1960:

1. The government should encourage the growth of Malay stream education as evidenced by Indonesia, where the Malay language was the main language of instruction in institutes of higher education
2. Besides subject mastery qualification, a pass in the Malay Language at Primary One level became an additional pre-requisite for all non-Malay teachers.
3. Aggressive campaigning in encouraging the usage of the national language

4. Increasing the use of textbooks published in Indonesia as resource materials; setting up of a translation unit to overcome the shortage of textbooks
5. Establishment of a new scheme which allows for the transfer of teachers teaching English language to Indonesian
6. Providing courses for Malay stream teachers who wish to hone their expertise in the language
7. Build vocational Malay stream schools.

Status and Use of the Malay Language

The prospect of merging with Malaya to gain political and economic stability has led the government to encourage widespread use of the Malay Language in Singapore amongst its multi-racial citizens. Many initiatives to promote and privilege the Malay Language were carried out; for example:

1. Large subsidies given to the broadcasting agency, the Singapore Radio Corporation, to carry out programmes teaching the Malay Language.
2. Efforts in making it compulsory for all government employees to pass the Malay Language test administered by the government before the confirmation of their job status. Non-Malay teachers (teaching other subjects than Malay) were also required to pass the Malay Language examination at Primary One level, whereas the other government employees were required to pass the same examination at Primary Two level, for which ability to read notices and write letters as well as communicate in Malay language was emphasized.
3. Bonus was disbursed to teachers who passed the Malay Language examinations amounting to \$200 for those who passed the examination at Primary Two level and \$500 for those who passed the Primary Three examination.
4. A series of Malay Language weeks were carried out in 1964 and the National Language Month was established in 1965. The latter was held from 25 November 1965 to 11 December 1965.
5. The composing of *Majulah Singapura* by Zubair Said was chosen as the national anthem of Singapore. The anthem was sung every day in all schools in Singapore. This is to popularize the usage of the national Language amongst the younger generation in Singapore.
6. All instructions by the Office of Defense in the marching field were delivered in the Malay language.
7. Persons who wish to apply for citizenship must have knowledge of the national language as a naturalization process.
8. The national language was taught in non-Malay stream schools as a second or third language. For English stream schools, the Malay Language was adopted as the second language whereas in the Chinese and Tamil stream schools, English was the second language and the Malay Language became the third language.
9. The formation of the National Language Action Council, which encompassed all ethnic groups and was not dependent on any political party, was responsible for the encouragement of the use of the Malay Language, especially among the non-Malay population.
10. The national language was given preference in public notices and public service announcements.

The concerted efforts of the government and the Singaporean citizens had elevated the status of the Malay Language. This facilitated the government's plan of merging with Malaya, which came to fruition on 16 September 1963 when Singapore became a part of Malaysia.

Nevertheless, the challenges faced by the government in terms of politics especially from left-wing communists and also the educational system such as balancing the needs of the four streams of education at that time were becoming more pronounced. Despite the government's efforts to set up policies that gave equal treatment to all the four streams of education, the economic and social transformations caused the gap between the utilitarian values of the English Language as compared to the other mother tongue languages to widen. The hope that the Malay Language, as a *lingua franca*, would connect the various layers of society in terms of class, ethnicity and generation was fast dissipating (Gopinathan, 1974:49).

As such, on the 9th of August 1965, after continuous political rife that could not be resolved; Singapore was separated from Malaya and became a republic that stood apart from Malaysia. During a press conference on this day addressing the separation, the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew emphasized:

“we are going to have a multi-racial nation in Singapore..... we unite regardless of race, language, religion or culture.”

On the 11th of August, the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew said:

“ There would be equality of races but Malay would remain the national language and existing Malay privileges would continue.... The Government’s multi-racial policy would be written into the Singapore Constitution with safeguards for minorities and steps to raise the economic and educational standards of the Malays.” (Gopinathan, 1974: 43)

The Decline of the Status of the Malay Language in Singapore

Despite the earlier efforts of encouraging the use of the Malay Language, the reality of the economic needs of a nation with little natural resources became more apparent. In the months leading up to the year 1966, after the political separation between Singapore and Malaysia, it was clear amongst the Singaporeans that the Malay Language no longer had the bright future it was once promised. Great fluency in the Malay Language could no longer guarantee the future of Singaporeans. The role of the national language was more ceremonial than functional. On the other hand, the English Language rose to become the most important official language, as noted by De Souza in the following excerpt:

“..... The de facto dominant working language is beyond doubt, English”.

(De Souza, 1980:116)

As soon as this political change occurred, the Malay Language was affected greatly, and many changes happened which impacted the lives of Singaporeans. Among the changes that occurred were:

1. The Malay Language lessons began to disappear from the media
2. The revocation of the bonus which were handed out to those who were fluent in the Malay Language in the early '60s
3. Knowledge of the Malay Language no longer became a criterion in the confirmation process of employees in government offices.
4. Lesson in the English Language and Mandarin occupied more space in newspapers and media broadcasts began broadcasting programmes teaching the English Language.
5. Public notices and road signs were increasingly written in the English Language.
6. As we know, the main language in the Republic of Singapore has close ties to the languages taught in schools; and these two are closely related to the political developments in the country. The declining importance of the Malay Language had resulted in the declining numbers of students enrolling into the Malay stream schools. This phenomenon was recorded in the writing of Lawrence Basapa in the Straits Times on 12 April 1970 in which he predicted the English stream schools to be more popular in the 1970s. A review of the newspapers in the '70s also revealed that 82% of the Malay population would choose to send their children to English stream schools had they been given a choice. (Gopinathan, 1974:45)

With the changes and development that were occurring, it was clear that the Malay Language was affected greatly. The country with an area of 692.7 square metres was the smallest in South East Asia and has a population of 5.5 million with the influx of immigrants. The demographic of Singapore was unbalanced where 74.3% were Chinese, 13.3% were Malays, 9.1% were Indians and 3.3% were categorized as others (Department of Statistics, Singapore: 2014).

The motivation to spread the Malay Language by the government and the multi-racial Singaporeans waned after independence and separation from Malaya.

Fluency in the Malay Language was not viewed as economically valuable for the country. This view aligned with the need for survival in the economic landscape and was shared not only by the government and non-Malay Singaporeans; the Malay community itself shared the same sentiments.

With the declining use and importance of the Malay Language, the drive to learn and spread it dissipated as well. Not only did the importance of the Malay Language decline for the non-Malay Singaporeans, the Malay Singaporeans, who had to compete against the non-Malay Singaporeans, held the same view. They also raced to learn the English Language to remain relevant and be of the same standard as non-Malay Singaporeans competing in the job market.

As a successful industrial nation, human capital is the main resource for advancing the economy of Singapore. In achieving economic success, and meeting the needs of families, the fact that the English Language became a necessary catalyst cannot be denied in the Singaporean context. Because of this, the Malay Language declined in value as compared to the English Language and Mandarin became the most important language in raising the socio-economic status of the lives of its citizens in Singapore.

The evidence of the decline of the status of the Malay Language can be found from various perspectives:

1. Domain of Use of the Malay Language in Singapore – the Disappearance of its Status as the Lingua Franca

The domain of use of Malay Language has shrunk. Where it was formerly considered to be the lingua franca and used in many different domains such as trade, home, education, religion and others, its use in these domains has now shrunk. The Malay Language is currently used in certain domains only and is not the choice language in trade and religious contexts among the younger generation. It is also not the home language for a segment of the Malay community. The number of Malay families opting to speak English as their home language is increasing. According to Mr Ng Eng Hen:

“Only 1 in 10 of Primary 1 Chinese students in 1982 came from homes that used English – the figure today is nearly 6 in 10. For Indians it has moved from 3 in 10 to 6 in 10; Malays – 0.5 in 10 to 3.5 in 10. A seismic shift in language environment has occurred within one generation. Those above 40 years of age today would have grown up in homes that spoke their Mother Tongue Language, either predominantly or partly, either with parents, grandparents or siblings. But increasingly, children of all races now come from homes that speak English predominantly” (Ng, 2009 <http://nas.gov.sg>).

The development or the cause of language shift is similar according to research that has been carried out by academics in this field. In most situations, the language that enjoys greater importance in a certain community becomes the dominant language, causing a language shift.

This change affects Malay students as well, the domains in which the language is used shrunk further, especially for Malay students whose only exposure to Malay Language is in schools, learning the school variation of Malay Language known as ‘*bahasa baku*’. The use of the colloquial variation of Malay Language has been diminishing in line with the decreasing numbers of Malay families speaking Malay Language as their home language. This is a concern as this phenomenon would progressively cause the disappearance of colloquial Malay Language in Singapore. Table 1 shows the language most frequently spoken at home in Singapore:

Table 1 Language Most Frequently Spoken at Home (2000 Census)

| Language Most Frequently Spoken at Home | Total | Chinese residents | Malay residents | Indian residents |
|---|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Total | 2,887,552 | 2,236,061 | 405,602 | 211,015 |
| English Language | 665,087 | 533,948 | 32,173 | 75,079 |
| Mandarin | 1,010,539 | 1,008,489 | 303 | 228 |
| Hokkien | 329,583 | 328,768 | 136 | 81 |
| Teochew | 141,569 | 141,337 | 16 | 38 |
| Cantonese | 163,703 | 163,279 | 53 | 58 |
| Other Chinese dialects | 52,418 | 52,376 | 14 | 16 |
| Malay | 406,549 | 5,270 | 371,401 | 24,434 |
| Tamil | 91,015 | 29 | 286 | 90,621 |
| Other Indian dialects | 19,862 | 32 | 187 | 19,522 |

In tandem with the diminishing use of colloquial Malay, the pidgin variation or bazaar Malay would most likely disappear completely in Singapore. If we look into the domain of trade, it is clear that transactions occurring in shopping centres are mostly done in the English Language. Where the use of bazaar or 'wet market' was formerly common amongst sellers and buyers of the different races, the scenario has changed. Many markets are dominated by the use of the English Language with the presence of second generation sellers or sellers who are much younger who had gone through basic education in the English Language.

At the same time, drastic changes were happening in the domain of religion, which was formerly dominated by the use of Malay Language by the Malay community. Many of the young Malays in the community such as the third and fourth generation (G3 and G4 respectively) are more comfortable learning about their religion in classes where English is the language of instruction. Religious classes or programmes such as Kids Alive and Teens Alive are catered for children and teenagers respectively and have gained popularity in the local community.

Moreover, with the increasing number of immigrants in Singapore from all over the world, the Friday sermons are no longer delivered in the Malay Language in a few local mosques. There are mosques where the sermons are delivered in English Language or the Tamil Language to meet the needs of the congregants. The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, or MUIS, does not seem to be concerned by this as their focus lies in the area of religion and not language. Language is just a platform for delivery, and regardless of the language chosen, the main purpose remains fulfilling religious responsibilities. As such, the Malay Language is no longer accorded special status as the only language in the domain of religion, with competition from other languages, specifically the English Language.

2. Mixed Parentage and Choice of Mother Tongue as the Second Language in Schools

As discussed earlier, it is mandatory for every Malay student to take Malay Language as a mother tongue or second language in school. This regulation is based on the race found in the birth certificates of students or the racial group found in the identification cards of their fathers. Since the early days of the bilingual system till 2010, the race of a child is determined by a patriarchal system following the race found in their father's identity cards. In this regard, a father's race automatically becomes the race of his child. As such, if the race stated in a father's identity card is Malay or other sub-ethnic Malay groups, his child would automatically take Malay as his/her mother tongue. Conversely, if the child is born to parents of different races, the child's race would be the same as that of the father.

Recently, however, many have questioned the determination of race in this manner resulting in the government taking on a more flexible approach in the registration process of births in Singapore. Starting from 2 January 2010, the birth registration form has been reviewed to include a space where parents could declare their choice of race for their child. The race chosen could be either the father's or the mother's. This could be seen from the following extract:

“The Government does not assign race to a person but follows the general rule that a child’s race would follow that of his or her father. Nevertheless, recognising that the diversity of Singapore’s racial demographics has increased in recent years due to the inflow of immigrants and the rise in the number of locals marrying foreigners, with effect from 2 January this year, our birth registration forms were revised to provide for declaration by the parents on their child’s race during birth registration. Previously, such a child would be registered following the general rule as having the race of the father. The recent change gives parents who are of different races the flexibility and choice to decide how their child’s race should be recorded. The Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) is not the authority or expert on “race”. It will accept a race declaration so long as it falls within generally accepted notions of ethnicity by lineage. For example, a Caucasian-Chinese couple may decide to have their child’s race recorded as Caucasian, Chinese or Eurasian”.

(Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs, 2010)

This step, viewed as a fair approach to race determination, had been further questioned and led to a heated debate amongst Singaporeans, resulting in much controversy and complaints. This caused the government to allow for “double barreled” race for children of mixed parentage, where parents may include both their races in their children’s birth certificate. This can be clearly gleaned from the following extract:

“The Government has considered this matter carefully, and has decided to allow parents of different races reflect both their races as a double-barrelled race in their child’s NRIC, on top of the existing expanded options of choosing only one of the 2 different races, for their child. Some examples could be Indian-Chinese, Caucasian-Chinese or Malay-Indian. This policy change will be subject to certain rules. We all know the society trends suggest that a child of a mixed parentage tend to identify himself/herself more closely with one of the two races. For parents who prefer their child’s race to be double-barrelled, they will have to decide the dominant racial identity for the child and this is to be put as the first of the two components of a double-barrelled race. Take the example of an Indian father and a Chinese mother, if the parents decide that Chinese will be the dominant racial identity for their child, the race will be “Chinese-Indian”. So, Chinese becomes the dominant race reflected first. If the mixed-marriage parents are undecided on the race to be reflected, but still prefer their child’s race to be double-barrelled, ICA will reflect the race of the father first, “Indian-Chinese” in the example where the parents don’t make a choice. Of course, parents can still go with the default option of following the father’s race, which is Indian, if they are undecided on which race to choose, or follow the mother’s race, Chinese, if they so decide, and need not go for the double-barrelled race option. So, flexibility is now greater and there are more choices. (Ho Peng Kee, 2010)

This greater flexibility proved to be another challenge for the conservation of the Malay Language. The mandatory policy of Malay students taking the Malay Language as their mother tongue in schools may no longer be a catalyst to efforts of conserving the language. Making the subject Malay Language mandatory for the Malay race is considered to be a vital step for the government in its attempt to conserve the culture, language and values of its citizens. The flexibility of registering the race of mixed parental children as “double-barreled” would likely impact on the choice of language made by parents and ultimately, the number of pupils choosing the Malay Language as their mother tongue in schools.

3. Opportunities in the Use of the Malay Language

The fast-paced life in Singapore affects the opportunities in using the Malay Language within the Malay community. The formation of social groups made up of multiple races where the Malay Language is not commonly understood led to the use of a language that is understood by all, i.e., the English Language. Students in schools have packed schedules filled with academic and co-curricular activities and their interactions with family members from the older generation are minimal. As such, the frequencies of interaction of the G3 with their friends of various races of the same age were higher causing them to use the English Language in their daily communication. Their social network is mostly made up of family members, friends and strangers who use the English Language compared to those who use the Malay language or other sub-ethnic languages such as Javanese, Baweanse and Banjarese.

Research done in the area of language use in Singapore reveals that the G3 report that they more frequently read books in the English Language rather than the Malay Language and watch television shows in the English Language. The limited exposure impacts on the acquisition of vocabulary in the Malay Language amongst the younger generation of Malays (Roksana, 2003; Kamsiah, 2005).

The Impact on the Malay Language

In this context, it is clear that the developments in the area of politics, economy and education greatly influenced the change of status of the Malay Language in Singapore. The decline in the status of the Malay Language happened in stages in line with the phases of development in education and competency of the workforce in the English Language, revealing the Malay community's efforts in maintaining competitiveness in the Singaporean context. Fluency in the Malay language no longer guarantees the future of Singapore residents as a whole, especially so for the Malay community. The narrative that continues to elevate the need for the English language directly displaces the Malay Language as the lingua franca and the main language used during the early days of independence to a status of much lesser importance.

Efforts in Preserving the Malay Language

Realising the fact of the declining status of the Malay Language recently and the importance of preserving the mother tongue and the values and culture of the Malay community, a variety of efforts have been made by Malay organisations in Singapore. For the Malay community, the ongoing challenges to the future of the Malay Language have led many parties to take steps to ensure that the Malay Language will continue to exist in Singapore. These efforts are related to the concept of 'Reversing Language Shift' referenced by Asmah (2006) as '*Anjakan Bahasa Patah Balik*' (BPB). These efforts by the Ministries include:

- Raising the use of oral Malay Language, with the increase in weightage of the oral component of the subject Malay Language;
- Encourage the appreciation of reading in the Malay Language amongst students;
- Increase the competencies of Malay Language teachers with more support from government for teachers to upgrade their qualifications to a Bachelors' or Master's degree;
- Encourage the participation of more students, teachers and users of other languages in Malay literary and cultural activities;
- Develop and provide reading resources from preschool to high school; and
- Enrich student experiences through study visits and other programs overseas led by selected experts.

The Malay Language and Learning Promotion Committee (MLLPC) has access to funds for organization of the said activities by Malay organisations in Singapore such as the Majlis Bahasa Melayu Singapura (MBMS- Singapore Malay Language Council), Persatuan Persuratan Pemuda Pemudi Melayu (4PM - Malay Youth Literary Society), Kesatuan Guru-guru Melayu (KGMS- Singapore Malay teachers' Union), Persatuan Guru-guru Bahasa Melayu (PGBM - Malay Language Teachers' Society), Angkatan Sasterawan '50 (ASAS '50 - The Singapore Writers' Movement 50) and MENDAKI (Council for the Development of Singapore Malay/Muslim Community), which have extensive expertise in the Malay language and culture.

In July 2006, the then Minister for Education, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, announced the allocation of grants of \$300,000 yearly for a period of 5 consecutive years by the Ministry of Education with the aim of funding the programs organized by Malay Language Learning and Promotion Committee (MLLPC). In addition to the grants, the Ministry of Education also offered to match dollar for dollar any donations collected by MLLPC to a maximum of \$1.5 million. This means, the Ministry would have provided a sum of \$3 million to the Malay community for the promotion of the Malay Language and culture for a period of 5 years.

Conclusion

It is clear that the usage of the Malay Language in the present context is facing an enormous threat. The pull of globalization affecting the Malay community in Singapore proves daunting and difficult to counter. Although there is a collective consciousness about the declining usage of the Malay Language in Singapore by various parties; however, efforts that have been carried out have not improved the situation significantly. The Malay residents in Singapore are aware of the fact of the declining proficiency of the younger generation in the Malay Language. The impetus to gain success consciously or otherwise led them to a dilemma of choosing something to sacrifice and in this case their mother tongue in order to achieve their goals. The question is whether the treasure that is to be sacrificed is more important in their lives or the life goals that they try to achieve are more important or urgent? This dilemma is faced by the Malay community in Singapore.

The issue of language status is one that is complex and sensitive. As such, the question that needs to be pondered upon is whether the reason for the Malay Language not to be on par with English language and the other main languages of the world is due to the lack of proficiency among the Malays or its lack of commercial viability.

From the aspect of popularity, the English Language is far more popular and widely used willingly by all communities. Moreover, people from all over the world desire to learn the English Language so that they may explore all kinds of knowledge published in the English Language as well as take advantage of the economic opportunities overseas.

It can be concluded that if a language is able to spread knowledge in the fields of science and technology, it will naturally gain popularity, surviving through future generations with pride, and learnt by foreigners in order to reap the benefits.

It is clear that the commercial value of the Malay Language is not apparent. The task of raising the status of the Malay Language no longer lies with the language specialists of each country; instead, this task requires the shared responsibility of the entire Malay Language speakers including engineers, scientists, doctors, lawyers, judges, researchers, teachers, political parties, entrepreneurs and others. If the intellectuals within the Malay community are able to come up with new innovations, new knowledge and explore the world of business to reach new heights of success, especially in the field of science and technology, then it is certain that the Malay Language will not face the challenges it faces now. If the Malay Language continues to be championed only by the language specialist or the Malay Language teachers, the chances of successfully increasing the commercial value of the language are slim.

As such, the responsibility of raising the status of a language falls not only on language specialists; rather it is the responsibility of everyone in the Malay community to collectively make the effort for the goal to be achieved, no longer limited by political, economic or social factors. The Malay world would have to unite and think seriously about how to raise their dignity and achieve success and when this is achieved, the Malay Language would naturally enjoy a higher status.

When the Malay community is successful in various fields and record new knowledge in the Malay Language, it would follow with other communities wanting to learn to speak the language, concurrently raising its status. Language can be likened to gold – the fluctuation of its price lies in factors surrounding the value of the gold and not its quality as this remains unchanged. This is similar to language where its value lies in the success, dignity and pride of the Malay community.

Endnotes

¹ Department of Malay Language and Culture, Asian Languages and Cultures, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University Singapore, Email; roksana.abdullah@nie.edu.sg

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